

# Naval War College Review

---

Volume 34  
Number 5 *September-October*

Article 2

---

1981

## President's Notes

Edward F. Welch Jr.  
*U.S. Navy*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Welch, Edward F. Jr. (1981) "President's Notes," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 34 : No. 5 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol34/iss5/2>

This President's Forum is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

In May of this year I visited the People's Republic of China as a member of the U.S. Military Education and Training delegation. Our group, 14 military officers from all services and a civilian interpreter, was in China for 16 days. We visited a number of Army, Navy and Air Force training installations as well as advanced schools and were able to gain a good exposure to the PRC military and their systems of training and education.

This visit reciprocated the U.S. visit of PRC Vice Minister of Defense Xiao Ke and his Military Academies delegation in October of 1980. Our delegation was led by LTG William R. Richardson, USA, then Commandant of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and now the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, U.S. Army, and included the Commandants of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, the U.S. Army Infantry School and the USAF Air Command and Staff College as well as specialists in education and training from all services. RADM Don Jones, Director of East Asia and Pacific Region, OASD/ISA, did a superb job in organizing and administering the trip. The U.S. Defense Attaché, BG Webb, accompanied us throughout most of the tour in China. The U.S. Naval Attaché, CAPT Sam Monk, was with us in Shanghai.

I should say from the outset that we were received most cordially at every stop. We traveled in-country on an aging but well-maintained IL-18 aircraft. Since most of the installations



visited were out in the country, we also spent many hours in cars and Japanese minibuses making our way through crowded village streets and along narrow country roads. We were told that photographs were permitted everywhere except at air training fields and below-decks on ships (we didn't go below-decks).

We spent our first 3 days in Beijing where we met with government and military officials, visited the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Military Academy and had discussions with the Secretary-General of the Beijing International Strategic Issues Association. We also had a meeting with Geng Biao, Vice Premier and Minister of Defense.

In Dalian, we visited the Surface Ship Academy, a 4-year midshipman school for surface line officers. Submariners and aviators receive their training at separate schools. There were 1,000 midshipmen in training under the guidance of 300 instructors. Entrants come from high school or from the fleet; all have to pass the national college entrance exam. The dropout rate is 20 percent, usually in the first year. It is truly a Spartan environment. About 30 percent of the curriculum is dedicated to political indoctrination. We also learned here (and this seemed to be a common practice) that instructors usually spend

## 2 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

an entire career at one institution and that there is little rotation between sea duty and instructor duty.

In Dalian we also visited the Army School for basic officer training and toured an impressive air raid shelter that runs for 10 miles under the heart of the city and holds 40,000 people.

We then flew to Shenyang for a Sunday climb of Mt. Qianshan, a visit to a hot springs where we all soaked in very hot baths, and a tour of Machine Tool Factory #1.

Next came Shijiazhuang and a visit to the Armor School where 1,000 students were training for regimental and higher command. We visited classrooms and the firing range where tanks engaged in subcaliber live firing exercises. As we saw throughout the trip, the PRC military practices great economy in training, and some of their training devices and training aids are quite ingenious. At the 4th Flying School of the Air Force, in addition to classroom tours and briefings, a flight demonstration was given using propeller and jet trainers.

In Xian, the ancient capital of China, our tour took us to the Engineering College of the Air Force where 2,500 officers are trained at college level in aircraft maintenance, airfield construction and aeronautical engineering. We also made a visit to the 4th Military Medical College where medical officers for all services are trained. The college produces 450 graduates annually. The hospital that serves this college has done some pioneering work in the restoration of severed limbs and the treatment of burns.

Nanjing brought visits to the 179th Infantry Division where we witnessed basic and field training, including weapons firings and a tour of the 1st Ground Surface Artillery School. An interesting note is that the army division grows 50 percent of the food it consumes. We also cruised on the Yangtze, truly a mighty river.

At Nanjing, I was particularly interested in our visit to the Naval College of the PLA, which is the counterpart of our Naval War College. In 1952, a Naval Department was added to the PLA's Military College; this led to the establishment of this separate college in 1957. The regressive effect of the Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966 was felt here, as it was throughout institutions of higher learning throughout China, for the Naval College was closed from 1969 to 1977.

The Naval College is a "command college" for training middle and high-ranking commanding officers of the Navy. There are six classes: (1) Senior Commanding Officers Class (short-term professional research training); (2) Combined Arms Commanding Officers Class (2 years); (3) Naval Air Force Commanding Officers Class (1 year); (4) Rear Services Commanding Officers Class (1 year); (5) Staff Officers Class (1 year); and (6) Political Officers Class (1 year). There are 554 students enrolled with 212 teachers; students are not accompanied by dependents. Most of the faculty have been with the college since its inception with the exception of the shutdown period when most of them had to work in the fields.

There are also 100 students engaged solely in research; other students can also take an active part in the research in an elective capacity. Reportedly, the teachers in the Research Department participate regularly in the formulation and revision of directives on naval doctrine and training, in exercise maneuvers and analysis, in tactical and technical evaluation of weapons and equipment, and in scientific research.

We were able to join in very productive discussions with faculty members. We ran into expected communication problems, but overall we had very frank exchanges.

Our final stop was Shanghai, advertised as "the most populous and most polluted city in the world." Here we

**PRESIDENT'S NOTES 3**

toured five ships of the East China Sea Fleet. All of these ships were built in China and the Chinese are quite proud of their shipbuilding achievements. The ships were fully dressed with officers and men manning the rails.

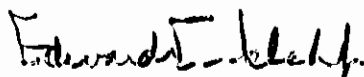
No submarines were present. When asked, the delegation was told that the submarines were "elsewhere conducting training." We did make topside tours of a *Luda*-class destroyer, a frigate, a mine-sweeper, a submarine chaser and an escort boat. The destroyer and frigate are fitted with surface-to-surface missiles. All guns and armaments were well-maintained. Most of the equipment is quite old, and the naval leadership with whom we spoke stressed their need for modern defense technology.

Officers formerly were able to be commissioned from the ranks as well as upon graduation from an academy. Since 1980, a policy has been adopted that all officers must go to college or academies for their studies prior to commissioning.

Military service in the enlisted ranks is compulsory—5 years for sea duty, 4 years for shore duty. All of the petty officers come from those men who extend voluntarily on completion of their compulsory service.

There appears to be a great disparity in age between the top leadership of the Navy and the commanding officers of ships. In several instances, flag officers were former infantrymen who had made the Long March with Chairman Mao; they had never served a tour at sea. Great value is placed on combat experience and the need to retain such experience in the armed services. The PRC Navy has never known combat and a great deal of time is spent at their Naval College delving into the history of naval warfare.

This trip was extremely rewarding, both professionally and personally. We were able to walk through doors which have stood unopened for many years and to have surprisingly frank discussions with our military counterparts in many disciplines. Any future such exchanges will, of course, be subject to agreement between governments, but this was a good beginning.



EDWARD F. WELCH, JR.  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
President, Naval War College